



Airman of the Year SrA. Stephen Bridges

48th Component Repair Squadron

Role in mission: "I am a sensor systems team leader. I maintain and instruct others about maintaining the low altitude navigation and targeting infrared for night system, targeting and navigational equipment and bomb guidance systems. I help keep mission-capable rates above 90 percent, 15 percent above the Air Force rate."

Hobbies: "I'm a member of the World Kuk Sool Association and am currently a blue belt. I like to play any type of sports and do wood

crafts. I'm also going to school to become an emergency medical technician."

Last book read: "Tick Tock" by Dean Koontz

One person you would most like to meet and why: "I would like to meet Chuck Norris and Sean Connery. They do great charity work."

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? "I see myself continuing my education and becoming a physicians assistant and an officer."

Special achievements: Bridges has had many notable events in his life, not the least of which is the birth of his son last month. But things have been pretty hectic at work, too.

He was the team chief during a 90-day deployment to Aviano AB, Italy, in support of Operation Joint Guard. While he was there, "I helped teach both the people at the flightline and back in the shop how to troubleshoot pods," Bridges said. "It was me and another senior airman. We pulled long hours and helped both shops."

Bridges also saved the Air Force \$2,000 by fixing an airborne video tape recorder. "The AVTR had been weather damaged," he said. "I worked overtime replacing damaged parts and treating corrosion."

Bridges also volunteered to work on a date link pod system. The system was new and only one other person had any knowledge about it.

"I went through our (technical orders) and taught myself as much as I could about the system," he said. "It was a challenge."

"(Bridges) is a very aggressive maintainer," said MSgt. Norman Remchuk, element supervisor. "We know if we ask him to do something, he will do it and do it right."



Company Grade Officer of the Year

Capt. Kim Schmidt

48th Medical Operations Squadron

Role in mission: As the 48th Medical Operations Support Flight commander, she supervises the RAF Lakenheath hospital's personal readiness program, patient records, central appointments and overseas clearances. In addition, she is responsible for addressing patient concerns as the patient advocate for the 48th Medical Group.

Hobbies: "I just had a brand new baby. He

takes up a lot of my time right now," said Schmidt. She also enjoys traveling on the European continent and cooking.

Last book read: "All I've been reading is baby books and children's books," said Schmidt.

One person you'd like to meet and why: Schmidt had two people she'd like to meet: Hillary Clinton and Gen. (Ret.) Colin Powell. "I'm a big admirer of (Hillary Clinton) and I'd like to hear her views on health care one-on-one," she explained. "I think she's an intelligent woman ... she has a lot of good ideas." She also respects Powell for what he's achieved during his career. "I'd like to know if he plans on running for president," she said.

Significant achievements: The captain's most important and most recent achievement was the birth of her and her husband's first child, Karl.

She also was proud to have won the USAFE Young Health Care Administrator of the Year award.

"For the medical service corps, that's the biggest award you can win at the Air Force level," said Schmidt. "It was great to win for USAFE."

Another significant achievement for Lakenheath's Company Grade Officer of the Year was revamping the 48th Medical Group's

Senior NCO of the Year SMSgt. Tom Puzzo

493rd Fighter Squadron

(earned nomination with 494th FS)

Role in mission: As chief, sortie generation flight, he's responsible for the management of 20 F-15C aircraft. He provides leadership to 180 maintenance people whose task is to provide quality maintained aircraft supporting home-station flying, exercises and contingency operations.

Hobbies: Coaching youth sports, camping, hiking, photography and computers.

Last book read: "My American Journey" by Colin Powell and "My Autobiography" by Ian Botham.

One person you would most like to meet and why: "Colin Powell, Margaret Thatcher, Cal Ripken Jr. They are all leaders in their respective fields and are outstanding role models."

Where do you see yourself in 10 years: "A retired chief master sergeant, after 30 gratifying years, teaching in a high school and coaching the school baseball team."

Significant achievements: Doing my part in leading the 494th FS to another successful year. We earned the USAFE nomination for the Maintenance Effectiveness Award for maintenance excellence. We also earned the USAFE nomination for the Air Force Association's David C. Shilling Award for demonstrating outstanding combat airpower.

Providing leadership to more than 270 maintenance airman in meeting the heavy daily flying schedules, his squadron achieved an 80 percent eight-hour fix rate which is five percent above the standard. His squadron weathered a 53 percent turn-over in flight personnel and still exceeded mission accomplishment.

patient satisfaction program. In the past, the program was disjointed, had no evaluation baseline and no statistics available to highlight trends or potential areas of concern.

Schmidt and her flight set to work standardizing surveys throughout the hospital, providing customer service training for patient representatives in each clinic, and establishing a three-day deadline to answer customer concerns. As a result, patient complaints are down.

"We've had a 25 percent decrease in patient complaints over the last two years," said Schmidt. "In the past, the patient advocate would handle all the complaints themselves. Now I delegate it out to the various clinics and they work one-on-one to help patients in that area."

"They try to solve the problem at the first level," she said.

But despite all of these accomplishments, the flight commander is adamant about giving recognition where it's due.

"I couldn't have achieved any of these Air Force accomplishments or achievements without the support of all the people in the medical operations support flight," said Schmidt. "We're just one big team. We all pitch in to do what it takes to get the job done."



Taking his skills on the road he managed what was said to be "the most successful Green Flag and WSEP deployment the wing had ever seen" according to Brig. Gen. David MacGhee, former 48th FW commander.

"It was lead by a truly outstanding senior NCO," MacGhee said.

"There are few individuals that can balance both the mission and people at the same time and do it very well. We just won the Air Force Maintenance Effectiveness Award small aircraft category and Sergeant Puzzo had a lot to do with that award," said Lt. Col. Evonne Griether, 494th FS maintenance officer. "He is an extremely dedicated professional. No one deserves the award more than him."

First Sergeant of the Year

SMSgt. William Thompson
48th Medical Group

Role in mission: "I represent the enlisted force and help ensure their ideas, concerns, and desires are known to the 48th Medical Group commander. I also represent the medical group commander and help open lines of communication."

Hobbies: Tae kwon do, reading, traveling and computers.

Last book read: "Executive Order" by Tom Clancy

One person you would most like to meet and why: I would love to meet Colin Powell as he epitomizes the military professional and he is a superb role model whom we all can look up to and attempt to emulate.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years: I will have retired from the Air Force and be starting my own small business.

Significant achievements: He was recognized by the Secretary of Defense for outstanding leadership and quality of life initiatives while serving as senior enlisted advisor and first sergeant for all Air Force people deployed to in Hungary April to August 1996. While there he identified ticks with killer diseases in the life support area. He also designed two laundry rooms and worked all the logistics to build and furnish them through self-help using excess equipment.

To improve quality of life, he had his people build two volleyball courts, two softball fields, horseshoe pits and a basketball court for the deployed area. They also developed a plan that help smooth the way for the summer Predator mission by improving the living areas for the multi-service team assigned there. The plan installed air conditioning units in the library, theater and day sleeper tents. It called for the installation of refrigerators in each tent and established a pest control program.

"MSgt. Bill Thompson epitomizes Gen. (Ronald) Fogleman's three core values," said Col. Paul Christianson, 48th Medical Group commander. "His leadership has helped instill that in the people of the 48th Medical Group. I can think of no one who would be more deserving of this award than Sergeant Thompson."

